Forerunner Conflict: Ruins of Reach

by Wesley Kivett

Summary: AU- This story takes place after the events of Halo 3, involving completely original characters, with a completely original story progression, after the events of Halo 3. This is a novelization of the war-sim community at

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Date: August 28th, 2592
><span>Location:<span> Imperial War Vessel, _Athena_. In orbit in the Epsilon Eridani, Planet Circumstance

Delta Squad

Andimion sat in his quarters, having finally cleaned and checked his armor for any broken part or tampered seal. All was in order, as he had expected. It was getting harder and harder to find replacement parts for the MJOLNIR systems, and Andimion already had experimental parts as it was. With rebel forces in the area, it paid to make sure that all armor was good to go. Next, he moved on to his rifle.

Behind him, Eric gave the door a slight knock. Andimion had heard him coming down the hall, but all the soldiers considered it polite to knock anyway.

"Come in," said Andimion, looking up momentarily from his marksman rifle. While the brotherhood could afford to use the BR55 rifle system, the Empire had been forced to use up stockpiles of old weapons, such as the M392. Andimion preferred the M392 system anyway, as it was a more robust weapon, and could handle a lot more punishment than the BR55, due to its rugged design. In the sort of missions that Delta got involved in, it paid to have weapons that could handle punishment.

Eric crossed the room, having a seat across from Andimion. Andimion knew Eric well enough to know that he should wait for Eric to make

the first move. Until he decided to do so, Andimion would simply continue checking his weapon.

While Eric remained quiet, Andimion's thoughts wandered to the war. These days, almost everyone thought about the war. For some, they could not recall a time of peace. For others, they relished the idea of going into combat. Andimion always thought about the big picture when it came to the war.

After the Human-Covenant war, the old UNSC had attempted to rebuild. The Sangheilli Empire had given as much aid to humanity as possible as their attempt at retribution. They refused to give the UNSC any insight on their technology however.

The UNSC gave the Outer Colonies very little funding to rebuild, instead choosing to focus on Earth and the Inner Colonies. Andimion still could not quite believe the audacity of the UEG. A rebellion would be the natural next step, if the Outer Colonies felt they were being mistreated. Sure enough, most of the Outer Colonies seceded from the UEG. And for a while, things just went dark from them. The UNSC did not have the military assets to reclaim the colonies, and the colonies had not declared war on the UNSC either. So, they were just left alone, and reconstruction commenced in the Inner Colonies.

That is, until open war was declared. Out of nowhere, the Brotherhood, as they called themselves, had launched an attack on Sigma Octanus. A UNSC fleet was dispatched to push back the rebel attack. What happened next, no one could have predicted. The rebels soundly defeated the UNSC within an hour of their arrival. No one could really explain why, seeing as the Outer Colonies could not have had a fleet powerful enough to stand up to the UNSC. The UNSC had made a big miscalculation, and it had cost them a whole battlegroup.

Not long after that, one man stood up in the military, and demanded reform. He claimed the UNSC was not organized and capable enough to stand up to the rebellion. He called for a reformed government, and he called for a full response against the Outer Colonies. The UEG, having acknowledged their weakened state, agreed to his proposal. The Empire was created not long after that. All of the worlds that belonged to the UNSC lost all representation, all for the sake of unity. The new Emperor recalled all troops to Earth, and completely reformed the military code. All Imperial troops were required to swear a new oath of loyalty, and were to begin new combat training immediately. The government worked around the clock for nearly eight years to recreate a new SPARTAN program. This program would progress to include all infantry arms, and some combat support roles. This, combined with a mass-produced MJOLNIR project, crippled the Imperial economy. The Emperor was heavily criticized at the time for putting all the resources that were supposed to go to rebuilding directly into the military. Whenever the Empire reclaimed Sigma Octanus however, it proved to be a complete success. Many worlds were converted to military factories and work sites. The Emperor had full backing to continue the military reform.

_The Brotherhood responded in force, however. As part of the old UNSC, they too had enough knowledge to create a rival SPARTAN program. Within months of their defeat at Sigma Octanus, the Brotherhood made multiple attacks in the Inner Colonies territories.

The Empire could not repel their advances. Something had changed in the Brotherhood tactics. They were brutal, and without mercy. They completely bombed the surface of the Imperial worlds, taking the population back to the Outer Colony territories to provide slave labor. With each world that the Brotherhood took, they gained more and more workers. More than that, the Brotherhood had far more advanced technology than the Empire. No one could explain how the Brotherhood was able to destroy so many Imperial assets. The Brotherhood won almost every battle they fought._

The Empire lost more and more Spartans every day, and could no longer afford to train more. By the time that 2592 came around, the Empire only had a third of the total number of Spartans they ever had. The Brotherhood, however, just made more and more. Morale was beginning to decline.

In 2591, the Empire began seeking alternative ways to change the tide of the war. They began pulling the best soldiers from the frontlines for an unannounced project. Andimion was called up to meet with the command staff of his unit, and several scientists began to explain the new project.

According to Imperial intelligence, the technological advances made by the Brotherhood was due to their efforts in utilizing the Forerunner technology that was found on Sigma Octanus. Their advances in the war were due to the technology found there, but nowhere else. It was believed that the counter-attack that the Empire made to reclaim Sigma Octanus halted their efforts of using more Forerunner technology, but it was not enough. With just the technology harvested from Sigma Octanus, the Brotherhood had been able to engineer more MJOLNIR power suits, and augment more Spartans, than the Empire could keep up with. While they had not actually made advances with the technology, it was hypothesized that the Brotherhood had found a more efficient method in creating them.

The Empire designated four squads to begin claiming and utilizing Forerunner technology in their armor, and in other implements. The hope was that these new squads would be able to make surgical strikes that would soundly cut down the Brotherhood leadership. What the Empire did not know, was that the Brotherhood had many more secrets. They had much more powerful soldiers hidden from the frontlines, and the team lost two whole squads. The Brotherhood seemed to be winning on all fronts, and the Empire was currently at a loss as to what to do. The mission remained the same: Find the Forerunner artifacts, harness them, and topple the Brotherhood leadership. There was nothing more that could be done.

Andimion honestly did not care about the situation. He was a soldier, and the Brotherhood was his enemy. He had killed many of them, even with all of their technological advantages. His armor certainly helped, but having a strong team with good instincts helped a lot more. As long as he was breathing, he would be fighting, and so would Delta. When everything around you gets tough, you just keep fighting to survive, and fight to keep your team alive.

After a few minutes, Eric finally spoke up.

"Andimion, you know where we are right?"

Andimion did not respond immediately, after a moment, he said, "We're

in the Epsilon Eridani System. That's all I need to know. We're here because of the Forerunner complexes found on Reach during the old war. All I care about, honestly, is that there are some Brotherhood guys to kill in this system, and some Imperials to keep alive. What's on your mind?"

"Command says our LZ is going to be right in the middle of the Danta Ruins. You know what happened to Bravo the last time we dropped there."

"Yeah, but we've got something that Bravo didn't have," replied Andimion.

"What's that?"

"Me."

Eric gave a dry laugh, not sounding entirely convinced.

Andimion turned to him, saying, "Look, we get our orders, we fight the rebels, and we complete our objective. I don't ask too much, and don't expect too much. The more we look into our situation, the more we're just going to realize that the odds are against us. Just look out for me, I'll look out for you, and we'll make it home. Got that?"

"Yeah, I got it," replied Eric with a grin.

Andimion knew Eric was one hell of a soldier, but he also knew that he could easily think himself into hopelessness if he was allowed to do so.

"We're about at zero hour. The Colonel wants us in the hangar in ten."

"I'll see you there in five."

As Eric walked out of the room, Andimion put his rifle back together, and placed it on his magnetized holster on his back. He quickly donned his suit, and was running a diagnostic while he headed toward the hanger. On the way, he ran into Jeff, the last member of Delta. Jeff was the sniper of the squad, and a very good one at that. Andimion owed his life to Jeff a dozen times over. Of course, almost everyone in the squad had saved each other on occasion.

The pair of them entered the hangar, which was full of activity. The whole fleet was preparing to make landfall on Reach. Reach was a contested territory, with Imperial holdings and Brotherhood holdings alike. The largest continent belonged to the Brotherhood, but the Empire had more fortified bases. How long that would be maintained was uncertain.

There were several maintenance crews that crowded around their Pelican dropship. In the loading bay stood their squad leader, Colonel Shevchenko, in his combat suit. He had a medium build, though that fooled no one who had seen him in combat. He was ruthless in close quarters, and with Jeff backing him up, he could close distance pretty quick. Eric and Andimion worked as a team in all situations, able to give creative support for the team.

The Colonel gave a nod as Andimion and Jeff joined the rest of the squad. Across the bay, the Colonel turned toward Omega squad and gave them a thumbs up. As of that moment, the operation was a go.

The squad entered the loading bay, and strapped in. Their pilot's callsign was Abel-2, and he addressed them almost immediately.

"Welcome aboard Delta. As of now, the operation has greenlight status. Prepare for a hot drop, the Brotherhood is ready for us."

Andimion hated this part. Riding through space and landing was something that was entirely out of his control. A red light shined through the loading bay, and it was their only source of illumination. They each stared at each other in their armor. Andimion's was a dark red armor that had a honeycomb pattern of panels that surrounded it. It was part of his armor's design, which allowed him to elude any detection by electronic means. His armor also included a near-perfect active camouflage system that utilized a Forerunner artifact as its power source. Andimion did not know enough about the artifact to figure out why it gave his suit active camouflage, other than it was the very same artifact that the Covenant used to engineer their active camouflage systems. Everyone in Delta had armor that was using Forerunner tech. Eric's armor used energy to manipulate objects. He could make anything ranging from weapons to whole walls move. Jeff's armor was completely integrated with his body, and he had near perfect aim. Jeff could make a perfect shot in one fluid movement faster than anyone else in the squad. The Colonel's armor could go into an overdrive mode that caused his armor to work at three-hundred percent. He could move faster, strike harder, and react quicker than anyone else when he activated his armor. It always seemed to wear the Colonel out however.

The hull of the Pelican shook violently. The pilot shouted over the radio.

"Hang on! Brotherhood anti-air is active! We're going to get fleet support any second now. Prepare for landing!"

The bay doors opened, flooding the loading bay with bright sunlight. Jets of light flashed in front of Delta as rounds flew through the air. The air cracked with explosions as incendiary rounds detonated past the fuselage. The Colonel sounded on the COM.

"Delta, we'll be landing on the beach in five minutes. Brotherhood has emplacements further down the line, and we are to tackle their right flank in order to get to their forward command. There have been reports of strong resistance. The kind of stuff we're not used to seeing. Stay alert, and, as always, move forward."

Andimion gave his "yes sir" and loaded a fresh mag into his M392, and slid the bolt forward. His weapon was good to go. He saw Eric do the same with his assault rifle, and the Colonel to load a shell into his shotgun. Jeff had already loaded his sniper rifle, and was now adjusting his scope settings. When the Pelican dropped down, the team filed out. The Colonel and Andimion stepped out first, checking the area for enemy shooters. Jeff and Eric filed out next in practiced precision. They made a 360 degree check of the area. Once they were sure they were clear, they moved on. In the distance, they saw the

flashes of anti-air cannons firing into the air. That was their first objective. The Empire could not land any more dropships unless the anti-air was taken out.

The squad moved onward, always cautious in case the enemy was preparing an ambush. They all felt uneasy with the silence. Usually the Brotherhood would have made a response to troop landings on their flank.

When Delta had reached a cliff edge, they all went prone to avoid detection. The battle was being waged below. While the Empire could not have landed any heavy armaments, several teams had landed and were currently taking fire from fortified positions. The Brotherhood had been able to effectively reinforce the defenses of the ruins. To Andimion, this confirmed the presence of the sort of Forerunner artifacts they had been sent to retrieve.

"Jeff, post up here and cover our advance. Andimion, you're going to infiltrate on the direct route and get to that command center. Eric and I are going to move on to the anti-air emplacements. Andimion, if you can take out their forward command staff, we're going to be able to sweep right through this area."

Andimion nodded, already activating his armor's ability and knew he was fading from view. He jumped down the cliff, grabbing the side of the cliff face to slow his momentum. An ordinary human would have been killed, or had his arm ripped off, but Andimion was far beyond a normal human at this point. The Empire had long perfected the augmentation process, and his MJOLNIR armor afforded him even more enhancements and protection.

When Andimion landed, he began sprinting toward the rebel entrenchments. There was a series of intertwining trenches with Brotherhood troops standing post. Andimion was tempted to take them out, but thought better of it. He did not need to waste the ammo, or take too much time from his objective. It was evident where the Brotherhood forward command center was, as it was surrounded by automated gun emplacements that could easily punch holes in capital ships. He silently passed by rebel soldiers, his footsteps barely kicking up dust, much less making a sound. The center was a permasteel building reinforced with quickcrete blocks and barriers. It would have been a challenge to get to it, if he were some fresh recruit.

Two guards stood at the main door, their rifles at the ready. Andimion almost smiled. He drew a seven-inch blade from its sheath on his shoulder, and withdrew another one from his lockbox on his thigh. He deactivated his stealth feature, the knives pointed directly at guard's throats. They reacted quickly, moving back. He rammed the ends of both blades into their jugulars, silencing them as they drowned in their own blood. His blades were made to go right through energy shielding with enough force. His armor easily gave him the strength required for it. He couldn't just slash right through MJOLNIR, but a stab was certainly possible. Cautiously, he stepped into the building.

In the dark, he activated his stealth feature once more. The Colonel raised him on the COM.

"Andimion, Eric and I are at the emplacements. So far we haven't

found any unconventional troops. Keep your eyes open. If things get
hairy, get out of their and rendezvous with us. Colonel
out."

Andimion kept both knives at the ready, moving through the dark
silently. He passes several maintenance crews, and even a few teams
of troops. His objective was the command center, and the staff that
resided there.

It wasn't difficult to get to the center, as there were several signs
pointing toward it. The room was octagonal in shape, and featured
several large screens with realtime displays of the battlefield.
There were five men that appeared to be barking orders at several
teams of coordinators at consoles all around the room. The whole
Brotherhood force that manned the defenses was being driven by the
men in this room.

Andimion moved towards the group of leaders, holding the blades
steadily. They weren't wearing any sort of battle armor, so this
would be easy. In one fluid movement, he drove the blade of the knife
right through the skull of one leader. It passed right through, as
did his armâ€¦ Almost as if it were through thin air. Andimion kept
moving, making short work of the leaders. He prepared for the
response of the crew in the room, but they simply kept on working.
Andimion felt that something just wasn't rightâ€¦

At once all the people disappeared. There was a clapping sound, and
Andimion tried to find where it originated. He could not detect
anything on his suit's motion detector, though the room was certainly
larger than the twenty-five foot radius his detector used. He drew
his rifle, careful not to make a sound that could betray his
position. He was still invisible after all.

"You won't find me," said a voice. It went on, "You see what I want
you to see. Though I find it amusing that I don't see what I want to.
That is a remarkable cloaking device you have there. I wonder how the
Empire could have come up with it? I'll have your armor examined
after I kill you. Allan, activate your armor."

A powerful beeping sound resonated in Andimion's armor as his suit's
shielding shut off completely. He was also surprised to find that
most of his armor's higher functions were shut down. His EMP
shielding was completely drained. He was visible now, and completely
vulnerable.

He dove to cover as the sound of gunfire resonated in the room. One
of the terminals shattered under the sustained fire, but Andimion was
shielded. He could see where the fire originated, and tossed a
grenade there. Immediately, two Spartans materialized before his
eyes. He figured the visual manipulation required the user to stay
still. One rebel Spartan wore a dark set of armor with a black visor,
clearly the leader. The other wore the standard blue armor, though it
was outfitted with a different helmet than the standard infantry did.
Andimion was unfamiliar with it.

A surge of lightning burst forth from the blue one, slamming into the
terminal Andimion took cover behind. Surely the leader was flanking.
He hoped his suit had enough time to reboot his combat systems as he
moved from around cover, activating his stealth as he leaped into the
air. The blue Spartan fired several rounds, though none hit Andimion.

Andimion drew his knife, driving it directly into the blue Spartan's thigh. He let out a shout, and closed his fist on Andimion's arm, twisting it. He sent another current right through Andimion's armor, causing him to become visible again. Andimion slammed his knee into the stomach of the Spartan, using his heel to lift off the ground once again, taking the knife with him. As he saw the dark Spartan halt, he knew he couldn't trust his HUD. He ducked outside of the room, entering the abandoned halls. His objective was lost now, and he needed to get outside, where he had more support. He ran as fast as he could toward the entrance, not even bothering trying to activate his stealth feature. The enemy had not followed, he assumed, because he had injured one of them. There was no way they knew he was all alone, and probably assumed his team was nearby.

"Colonel, the command staff isn't here. The rebels were alerted to our plan and evacuated them. They've got irregular troops here too. I'm heading to the rendezvous point, ETA three minutes. Andimion out."

He had hit a snag in the battle plan, but that didn't mean the mission could not be carried out. They had a whole other squad to back them up, and nothing was more important than getting to the Danta ruins. Nothing…

End
file.